

**Remarks of  
Annette M. Sandberg, Administrator  
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration  
to the  
Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance  
Annual Meeting  
Little Rock, Arkansas  
Monday, April 5, 2004**

On behalf of President Bush and Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. I want to congratulate all of you on the job you've done throughout the past year to help reduce the number of deaths, injuries and crashes on our nation's roadways.

It's an exciting time for us right now as we look forward to the landmark reauthorization of the federal surface transportation program. Safety is at the forefront of our concerns at FMCSA. But getting the economy moving has always been, and remains, a top priority for the President and his entire team.

The U.S. transportation system annually carries more than 16.3 billion tons of freight — valued at over \$12 trillion. And, as the economy takes off, we project freight volume will increase by more than 50 percent in the next 20 years. So we need to prepare.

Safety *is* at the very heart of our mission at the U.S. DOT and FMCSA. In 2002 we lost nearly 43,000 people on our nation's highways. That's about the equivalent of losing a Boeing 737 a day. Of that 43,000, nearly 5,000 deaths were related to commercial motor vehicles. FMCSA, FHWA and NHTSA share a commitment to reducing the fatality rate in all motor vehicle crashes by 41 percent from 1996 to 2008.

We do have good news, however, regarding truck-related fatalities. Nationally, these fatalities have decreased 5 years in a row. In fact, in 2002 the decrease was 4.2 percent — the largest in a decade. That was the only category of vehicle that saw decline that year.

We're pleased with our achievements in safety, and I enjoy discussing this with every group I visit. But I'm most pleased to discuss it with you because our partnership in this area has clearly paid off. FMCSA estimates that from 1998 to 2000 the roadside inspections and enforcement activities you performed had very impressive results:

- you helped save more than 1,500 lives;
- you helped prevent nearly 25,000 injuries;
- and you helped stop more than 36,000 crashes.

More to the point, these achievements are a direct result of the guidelines that CVSA and FMCSA developed together.

Another great example of our collaboration is the publishing of the Cargo Securement rules. I especially want to acknowledge the commitment on this initiative by CVSA's

Canadian members. Our joint effort on Cargo Securement has created a North American standard. We look forward to continuing to address these concerns and others with you.

I also want to talk about a safety priority for DOT — and we're working closely with you on this — safety belts. In addition to cost of human life, the cost of traffic crashes on our overall economy and health-care system is staggering. In 2000, motor-vehicle crashes consumed \$32.6 billion in the area of medical costs.

More than one-third of all lives lost in traffic crashes were people not wearing safety belts. And in 2002, more than half of the 588 commercial vehicle drivers who died in crashes were unbelted. In addition, a recent study by FMCSA showed that only 48 percent of CMV drivers buckle up.

So, last December Secretary Mineta gathered with enforcement and trucking leaders to launch the broadest effort this country has ever seen to get truckers to wear their safety belts. You, of course, have a critical role. For every one percentage point increase in safety belt use, 270 lives are saved. So, we really need your help. It's time to tell *all* drivers to buckle up!

This month the issue of traffic safety is not just national; it's global. The World Health Organization has selected traffic safety as the focus for World Health Day 2004, which is on April 7. Secretary Mineta has asked everyone at the DOT to help promote this.

The World Health Organization estimates that more than 1.26 million people die in traffic crashes worldwide each year. Traffic injuries are a leading cause of death worldwide. So, April 7 will kick off a year of activities and events around the world focusing on traffic safety. On that date the United Nations will introduce a 5-year plan to bring traffic safety to countries around the world.

World Health Day provides an opportunity to direct attention to what can — and should — be done. DOT and the Department of Health and Human Services are leading the US government effort to orchestrate and participate in World Health Day 2004.

I encourage all of you to join us in this effort by highlighting this important event in each of your states and communities. There are many resources available to you. NHTSA is leading the effort for the Department. Please check the NHTSA Web site to find out more.

The DOT has been quite focused on reauthorization of the federal highway and transit program. That, of course, includes funding for FMSCA and state-specific initiatives, such as MCSAP grants.

At the end of February, Congress passed a second extension of TEA-21 for just two months. But it expires at the end of April. As long as we are operating under an extension of the old authorization, we cannot give full year funding to the states. We are

only allowed to release money in the increments Congress has authorized. That is why we have only released seven months of funding at this time.

The Administration's bill is called SAFETEA. At \$256 billion, it would more than double funding for highway safety over TEA-21 levels in a fiscally responsible manner. The House and Senate also have both passed legislation for a six-year program at higher funding levels.

We at the DOT are focused on the passage of a fiscally responsible surface transportation bill. President Bush has laid out clear principles for what is acceptable in terms of funding this legislation. We are continuing to work with Congress to secure passage of a bill that meets those principles.

One concern that CVSA and FMCSA have shared over reauthorization is the many regulatory exemptions being sought for various types of carriers. I want to thank your leadership especially for clearly stating to Congress the risks caused by these exemptions. We really appreciate your help in maintaining these important rules that affect *everyone* in the trucking business.

I also want to mention the new Hours of Service rules. We *are* sensitive to the various challenges these new rules present to all involved. Every new rule and regulation prompts a period of adjustment, and we're already helping to guide everyone through their compliance concerns.

Your insight is very important to us. We've heard your concerns, and we promise to consider whatever feedback you provide. As you know, the rewriting of this rule was long overdue. We're committed to working with you to make it as effective as possible.

There are three initiatives I want to discuss today involving changes that will have a direct impact on your operations. The first is New Entrants. This is a key component of our 2004 program. It's an important effort to prepare New Entrants to the motor carrier industry for safe and compliant operations. This is critical, considering nearly 50,000 new carriers in the U.S. enter into service each year.

This initiative establishes a process for assuring they are ready to do so with ample knowledge of safety regulations and procedures. We believe in FY '04 we have the resources to support 100 percent of your state's New Entrants program.

But the change for this year is that the bulk of the monies and administrative responsibility is shifting to the states. CVSA asked that states assume more authority on New Entrants. Congress heard you, and FMCSA is honoring that. We basically agree that, just like vehicle inspections, this authority *should* be transferred to the states. So, Congress has appropriated \$25 million in grants to the states for FY '04.

Our field staff has been working with you to determine your specific needs. So far, we've received \$22 million in grant requests that we will be fulfilling. This hasn't been finalized yet, but we're working on it and it will be finalized soon.

We know most of you believe this to be a worthwhile program because of the high level of voluntary participation. Six states have chosen not to participate at this time, but we're working with them to get them involved. We feel strongly it will help *everyone* in enforcement if we have 100-percent participation in this program.

The second initiative that's changing a bit is the Commercial Vehicle Safety Plan (CVSP). The CVSP, of course, is the key to your receiving Federal MCSAP grants. Congress has been very focused on this process and, consequently, so has the DOT Inspector General. And, as you're probably aware, they're paying particularly close attention to data.

There's a good reason for this: good data is the key to identifying potentially unsafe carriers and drivers. The more complete and accurate our data is and the more efficient our data systems are, the better our ability to *prevent* violations and crashes. It's like the old medical adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

We know this is a sensitive topic for some of you. Many states do an excellent job of collecting and processing data on crashes and inspections. Others are experiencing some difficulties. I personally know how tough collecting and managing data can be.

We are ready to help you with your data issues. This is essential because we're now requiring that your CVSP will show in detail how you will fix your data problems. Again, the direction for this comes from Congress.

Addressing data concerns is indeed a high priority. But this effort will afford you an important benefit — 100-percent "high priority" Federal funding. I realize for many of you this is a formidable challenge. And we know you're not the only ones who collect this information.

FHWA and NHTSA also will participate in this process. They, too, recognize that better data collection benefits *everyone*. Both NHTSA and FHWA will have money available for improving data systems.

The third initiative involves a very challenging, creative and introspective look at how we're assessing compliance reviews (CRs). This is an area where we really *need* and *want* your help from the start.

I'm always pleased to discuss our progress in motor carrier safety. We *are* making *great strides*. The number of fatalities involving CMVs has decreased every year for the last five years.

However, at the same time we face some serious challenges. The number of carriers continues to increase every year. The number of miles traveled by all carriers is likewise increasing — at a faster rate than passenger cars.

There are additional requirements relating to New Entrants, tighter security following 9/11, and the possible opening of the Southern Border under NAFTA. Plus, we still have before us an aggressive safety goal — to significantly reduce traffic fatalities in just four years. And, while the demands are rising, our resources are likely to remain flat. That may or may not be fair, but that's the way it is.

Obviously, we will have to work harder and smarter to continue our progress in improving safety. We at FMCSA *accept* this challenge — we're devoted to working with you as our partners to increase our success.

Solving the problem begs many questions. How do we do this? And what's the best place to begin? Unfortunately, I don't have the answers at my fingertips. But that's why we especially need your help in this process.

We know what a great job you're doing on inspections. The results of these inspections help us find the poor safety performers. But we must look at *every* tool in our toolbox — how we use them, how we can change them, and how we can add to them.

At FMCSA we were delighted to learn that CVSA has created a Program Initiatives Committee to discuss new and strategic programs, including New Entrant and CR programs. The CR process consumes over 40 percent of our agency's staff time. It is the core of our enforcement program.

We, too, are very interested in reviewing the CR process as a key component in this effort. Together we need to explore ways to look at more carriers, more efficiently and produce a larger safety benefit. We must ask ourselves the key question: Are we evaluating and measuring the right things? And, are those measurements a sound predictor of risk?

This is especially true in light of my earlier comments about New Entrants. These are the carriers with a greater propensity for crashes and safety violations. We must get to the bad actors *before* they do harm.

While we don't yet have the solutions, we have a pretty good idea of how to approach the problem. Let me share it with you:

- We need the right people participating in a top-to-bottom rethinking of our CR process. And we believe all of you at CVSA are essential. There are, of course, other stakeholders we must include, and we can explore that together. But they must be individuals and groups that understand the fundamental concepts of traffic and motor carrier safety issues.
- We need to conduct regularly scheduled meetings and working sessions, complete with step-by-step objectives and evaluations of our efforts.

- We need to collect the right information in order to make smart decisions. I've already talked about the value of good data, and I think this will play a vitally important role in this initiative.
- Finally, we must be bold in our solutions. President Bush has challenged us to find new ways to achieve our goals, to break the mold and achieve remarkable results that benefit motorists and the nation.

I'm very optimistic that, working together, CVSA and FMCSA can find more efficient, less resource-intensive ways of determining safety fitness and improving motor carrier safety. As I say, it's just one area we want to explore with you. We are flexible in our pursuit, but adamant that we want to pursue it — as a *team*.

On behalf of my colleagues at DOT and FMCSA, we look forward to working with you on this initiative. We will continue to discuss details with CVSA leadership and welcome your feedback at future CVSA meetings.

Together, we have a number of issues before us that call for clear and straightforward communications. We want to work with you as partners to develop the most effective programs and project our common concerns.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today.